

To the Members of the California State Assembly:

I am signing Assembly Bill 1796, which exercises a federal option to provide food stamp benefits in support of individuals' efforts to successfully recover from drug lifestyles. The challenge of overcoming a drug addiction is substantial and universally denying food stamp benefits to people with felony drug convictions has created additional obstacles to independent drug free living and increases the likelihood of re-offending behavior.

This measure will allow the provision of food stamp benefits to individuals convicted of non-violent drug felonies who comply with treatment requirements. Individuals who do not participate in treatment or were convicted of felonies beyond personal use will remain ineligible. As such, this bill offers both an appropriate incentive and reward to individuals who overcome their addiction.

Technological developments in the benefit delivery system and studies on the positive economic impact of food stamp benefits warrant this policy change. The successful implementation of the Electronic Benefit Transfer system assures that food stamp benefits cannot be easily exchanged or converted into drugs. Food stamp benefits are entirely federally funded, and AB 1796 will bring millions of dollars into the state's economy at little cost to the state.

It is time for California to join the District of Columbia and 31 other states that have eliminated or modified the ban on food stamp benefits for individuals with felony drug convictions. With my signature California will assist individuals in becoming self sufficient, provide care for their children and overcome their drug addiction while adding millions of federal dollars to our economy.

For these reasons I support this measure.

Sincerely,

Arnold Schwarzenegger